

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

SAM-01 IO-13 SSM-03 SSO-00 ACDA-07 SAB-01 /083 W

----- 114484

R 031113Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1424

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6776

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MILI, SY, LE

SUBJECT: CALL ON EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR

1. CHARGE, ACCOMPANIED BY DCM LANE, CALLED ON EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR METWALLI AUGUST 2. CHARGE OPENED CONVERSATION BY AGAIN EXPRESSING OUR APPRECIATION FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S ASSISTANCE IN FACILITATING EVACUATION ON JULY 27. METWALLI EXPRESSED THANKS AND SAID THAT IT WAS HIS DUTY TO HELP IN ANY WAY HE COULD.

2. IN DISCUSSION OF RECENTLY CONCLUDED DAMASCUS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT, METWALLI SAID HE WELCOMED PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN ACCORD AND WAS OPTIMISTIC IT WOULD SUCCEED. HE REFUSED TO BE DRAWN ON SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN FEUD OVER REFERENCE TO SINAI II IN JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND POINTED OUT THAT PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH EARLIER ARAB LEAGUE RESOLUTIONS. HE PROFESSED IGNORANCE OF ANY PLANS FOR ARAFAT TO VISIT EGYPT (AS RECENTLY REPORTED IN BEIRUT PRESS). HE INDICATED THAT ORIGINAL PLAN HAD BEEN FOR ARAFAT TO GO TO DAMASCUS WHILE LIBYAN PRIMIN JALLOUD WAS STILL THERE; HE THOUGHT
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ARAFAT MIGHT STILL GO FOR SYMBOLIC RECONCILIATION

MEETING WITH ASSAD, BUT SAID THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CEASEFIRE WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN FORMALLY APPROVED BY BOTH PARTIES.

3. METWALLI NOTED THAT PLO HAS ALREADY NAMED ITS DELEGATION TO LEBANESE-SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN COMMITTEE (SEE BEIRUT 6762) AND SAID THAT DR. KHOLI INTENDED TO GO TO DAMASCUS TO DISCUSS COMPOSITION OF SYRIAN DELEGATION. PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD WELCOMED HIS VISIT BUT KHOLI HAD DECIDED TO WAIT A FEW DAYS IN VIEW OF RECENT GOVERNMENT CHANGE IN SYRIA. ONCE THESE TWO DELEGATIONS HAD BEEN NAMED, HE BELIEVED VARIOUS LEBANESE GROUPS WOULD CHOOSE THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS, UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF ARAB LEAGUE REP, WOULD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THE EARLIER TALKS IN WHICH THE ARAB LEAGUE DID NOT PARTICIPATE. METWALLI SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT IF SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN CEASEFIRE HELD, THE LEBANESE PARTIES, WHO WERE TIRED AFTER 16 MONTHS OF FIGHTING, COULD BE PERSUADED TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER AND BEGIN PROCESS OF WORKING OUT A SOLUTION. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE STRICTLY LEBANESE PART OF THE PROBLEM HAD EXISTED FOR THIRTY YEARS AND THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS WERE ACCUSTOMED TO DEALING WITH IT.

4. METWALLI WAS NOT IMPRESSED WITH NEWS THAT A NEW SAUDI CONTINGENT WAS JOINING ARAB LEAGUE PEACEKEEPING FORCE SINCE THEY WOULD NOT BE NEEDED IF CEASEFIRE HELD AND WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH IF IT DID NOT. HE SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD EVACUATION OF TELL ZAATAR HAD FINALLY BEEN ARRANGED FOR TOMORROW (AUG.3). WE AGREED THAT SUCCESS OF THIS OPERATION WOULD BE A POSITIVE STEP TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF A COUNTRY-WIDE CEASEFIRE.

5. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR METWALLI, WHO HAS BEEN IN BEIRUT FOR FOUR YEARS, WAS FRIENDLY AND CORDIAL. HIS OPTIMISM IS ENCOURAGING. HOWEVER, HE REPORTEDLY DOES NOT HAVE GOOD CONTACTS WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS
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AND HE MAY BE OVERESTIMATING READINESS OF SUCH MARONITE LEADERS AS CHAMOUN TO COMPROMISE.
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